

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 20, line 20, as follows:

The above-described tip recovery apparatuses have gripping apparatuses units for gripping the tips 14 at the inlets of recovery containers. When tips 14 used in the handling robot 10 and the dispensing robots 13 are inserted into the gripping apparatuses, the gripping apparatuses grip the tips 14. Thus, when the handling robot 10 and the dispensing robots 13 move the automatic pipettes 12 in this state, the used tips 14 are removed from the ends of the automatic pipettes 12, and are collected in the recovery containers.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 21, line 20, as follows:

Insertion holes 16c through which the dispensing robots 13 insert tips 14 at the ends of the automatic pipettes 12 are provided in the top surfaces of the casings of the reagent supplying apparatuses 16. These insertion holes 16c are disposed within the operating range of the dispensing robots 13. Also, each of the reagent containers 16b has an opening 16e at the upper surface thereof, which is disposed at a position corresponding to the position of the insertion hole 16c. With this arrangement, by rotating the tables 16a to position the openings [e] 16e of the reagent containers 16b directly below the insertion holes 16c in the casings, the dispensing robots 13 insert the tips 14 at the ends of the automatic pipettes 12 into the reagent containers 16b from above, which allows the reagents etc. contained inside to be drawn up. In addition, at least one of the plurality of reagent containers 16b is an empty container 16f that contains no reagents. If it is not necessary to draw up, for example, reagents with the dispensing robots 13, each table 16a is rotated to position the empty container 16f directly below the opening hole 16c of the casing to prevent dust etc. from being deposited on the reagents. The empty container 16f is not limited to a container; the empty

container 16f may be something like a block that closes the opening hole 16c. Two reagent supplying apparatus 16 and two dispensing robots 13 are provided in order to separately handle chemical solutions in the specimen, such as common trypsin, and liquids inherent to the specimen, such as blood serum.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 27, line 10, as follows:

Next, by operating the horizontal transfer mechanism 19, the culture vessel 3 containing bone marrow cells is transferred horizontally together with the shaker 21, and is positioned within the operating region of the dispensing robots 13. By operating the automatic pipette 12 having an unused tip 14 received from the tip supplying apparatus 15 attached to the end thereof, the dispensing robot 13 draws up a suitable amount of DMEM, blood serum, or various reagents from the reagent container 16b in the reagent supplying apparatus 16, and thereafter transfers the tip 14 to above the culture vessel 3 to dispense the drawn-up liquid into the culture vessel 3. By rotating the table 16a at this time, the reagent container 16b is positioned directly below the opening hole 16c.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 27, line 23, as follows:

When drawing up the blood serum and reagents, the tip 14 is replaced with an unused tip 14 from the tip supplying apparatus 15 each time the reagents etc. are drawn up. By doing so, bone marrow cells in a suitable culture medium exist in a mixed state in the culture vessel 3. To uniformly distribute the bone marrow cells in the culture medium, the shaker 21 may be operated to vibrate together with the culture vessel 3. Then, when all treatment is completed, the culture vessel 3 is returned in the operating region of the handling robot 10 through the operation of the horizontal transfer mechanism 19. In this case, the reagent supplying apparatus 16 rotates the table 16a to position the empty container 16f

directly below the opening hole 16c. The handling robot 10 places the lid 3b over the culture vessel main body 3a and returns the culture vessel 3 onto the tray 7.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 37, line 22, as follows:

The automatic culture apparatus 51 according to this embodiment operates in the same manner as the automatic culture apparatus 1 according to the second first embodiment as long as treatment of the cells in a culture vessel is normally carried out, and thus, a description thereof for normal operation will be omitted.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 39, line 1, as follows:

Then, the power-failure control circuit 41 allows the dispensing robot 13 to continue to operate, so that the dispensing robot 13 draws in reagents etc. from the reagent supplying apparatus 16 and dispenses the reagents etc. into the culture vessel 3. By rotating the table 16a of the reagent supplying apparatus 16 after completing supply of the reagents etc., the empty container 16f is positioned directly below the opening hole 16c of the casing and the reagent supplying apparatus 16 is stopped (step 5). By doing this, dust etc. is prevented from being deposited on the reagents etc. in the casing in the event of a power failure.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 39, line 22, as follows:

Further, when predetermined treatment of the cells in the culture vessel 3 is completed, the power-failure control circuit 41 moves the slider 20 of the horizontal transfer mechanism 19 to position the culture vessel 3 in the operating region of the handling robot 10. Next, the gripping arm hand 10a of the handling robot 10 is operated to cover the culture vessel 3 with the lid 3b (step 7). Then, after confirming that the culture vessel 3 is covered

with the lid 3b, that is, the culture vessel 3 is in a closed state, with the lid-open/closed detector 10f, the power-failure control circuit 41 stops the horizontal transfer mechanism 19 and the handling robot 10 (step 8). In short, the power-failure control circuit 41 stops the culture treatment apparatus 30 after allowing the culture treatment apparatus 30 to complete predetermined treatment. By doing this, dust etc. is prevented from being deposited on the cells in the culture vessel 3 in the event of a power failure.